

Message Text

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46

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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R 031251Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7993

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 1344

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PFOR SY ET US

SUBJECT: EPMG REACTION TO MEETING WITH PLF OSMAN SABBE

REF: STATE 022354 (NOTAL) AND PREVIOUS

1. DURING CALL ON FONMIN KIFLE FEB 3, AMB RAISED SUBJECT OF EPMG OBJECTIONS TO USG CONTACT WITH OSMAN. AMB SAID THAT IN RESPONSE TO REMARKS BY MOFA OFFICIALS EMBASSY HAD REPORTED THEM FULLY TO DEPT. DEPT HAD CONFIRMED VALIDITY STATEMENTS AND ASSURANCES ALREADY GIVEN BY POL COUNSELOR SEBASTIAN. AMB "ON INSTRUCTIONS" MADE STATEMENTS PARA 2 A AND B REFTEL.

2. KIFLE SAID HE WISHED TO REITEEATE EPMG CONCERN THAT USG HAD BEEN IN CONTACT WITH OSMAN, WHO IS VERY FREE WITH PUBLICITY AND WHO DOES NOT REALLY REPRESENT THE MILITARY WING OF PLF. USG HAD KEPT EPMG INFORMED IN PAST OF CONTACTS, AND EPMG HAD INTERPOSED NO OBJECTIONS, BUT EPMG WOULD HAVE PREFERRED THAT USG NOT CONTACT OSMAN. EPMG BELIEVES PLF MILITARY WANTS TO GET RID OF OSMAN, WHO IS "CONVENIENT MAN" WITH NOT MUCH USE. BY TALKING WITH HIM, USG WAS AFFORDING HIM AN OPPORTUNITY HE CAN EXPLOIT FOR HIS OWN PURPOSES. HE DOES HAVE CLOSE TIES
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WITH ARAB GOVTS. AMB REPLIED THAT EPMG HAD BEEN INFORMED

REPEATEDLY OF USG VIEWS ON POSSIBLE CONTACTS WITH CAPTORS, HAD BRIEFED EPMG ON PREVIOUS CONTACT WITH ELF REP IN KHARTOUM, AND THAT EPMG HAD NEVER INFORMED USG ABOUT ITS RESERVATIONS ABOUT CONTACT WITH OSMAN. AMB SAID HE WOULD REPORT KIFLE'S REMARKS, BUT ASKED QUITE SHARPLY WHETHER KIFLE HAD ANY CONSTRUCTIVE SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STEPS TO OBTAIN RELEASE OF AMERICANS, BEYOND ITS STATEMENTS OF RESERVATION CONCERNING OSMAN. KIFLE FIRST MENTIONED CONTACTS IN SUDAN, THEN BACKED OFF WHEN REMINDED THAT THIS WAS ELF, NOT PLF, CONTACT. AFTER CONSIDERABLE HESITATION HE SUGGESTED THAT USG HAD EMBASSIES IN OTHER CAPITALS THAN DAMASCUS, AND COULD BE IN TOUCH WITH PLF PERSONNEL OTHER THAN OSMAN. AMB SAID HE WOULD REPORT THIS TO WASHINGTON.

3. COMMENT: WHAT THIS RATHER STRANGE EXCHANGE AMOUNTS TO IS NOT RPT NOT OBJECTION BY EPMG ON PRINCIPLE TO ANY USG CONTACTS WITH PLF, BUT RATHER SPECIFIC OBJECTION TO CONTACT WITH OSMAN. EPMG PROBABLY BELIEVES THERE IS POSSIBILITY THAT OSMAN, WITH SHARP EYE ON PUBLIC RELATIONS, IS LIKELY TO PUBLICIZE USG CONTACT AS EVIDENCE OF USG "RECOGNITION." KIFLE ASKED SEVERAL QUESTIONS DESIGNED TO CLARIFY WHAT USG WOULD RESPOND IF ASKED TO CONFIRM WHETHER CONTACT WITH OSMAN HAD TAKEN PLACE, THUS INDICATING HIS CONCERN FOR PUBLIC EXPLOITATION BY OSMAN. AMB USED PARA 2 D OF REFTTEL IN REPLYING.

4. SUGGEST PERTINENT MESSAGES ON THIS SUBJECT SHOULD BE REPEATED TO KHARTOUM BY DEPT.
HUMMEL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL MILITARY RELATIONS, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS, MEETINGS, LIBERATION FRONTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 03 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: coburnhl
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976ADDIS01344
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760040-1088
From: ADDIS ABABA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760290/aaaadaql.tel
Line Count: 88
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 76 STATE 22354
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: coburnhl
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07 JUN 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <06 OCT 2004 by coburnhl>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: EPMG REACTION TO MEETING WITH PLF OSMAN SABBE
TAGS: PINS, PFOR, SY, ET, US, PLF, (SABBE, OSMAN)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006